DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 259 185 CE 041 907

AUTHOR Kaplan, Robert E.
TITLE The Perils of Intensive Management Training and How to Avoid Them. Technical Report Number 19.
INSTITUTION Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro, N.C.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-912879-17-3
PUB DATE Oct 81
NOTE 38p.
AVAILABLE FROM Center for Creative Leadership, P.O. Box P-1, Greensboro, NC 27403 ($7.00).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Education; Classroom Techniques; Educational Benefits; *Educational Needs; Educational Practices; Evaluation Criteria; *Group Dynamics; Guidelines; Individual Power; Inservice Education; Interaction Process Analysis; Interpersonal Communication; Interpersonal Relationship; *Leadership Training; *Management Development; Postsecondary Education; Self Evaluation (Individuals); Student Evaluation; *Teacher Student Relationship; Trainers; Training Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Intensive Courses

ABSTRACT

Although negative outcomes of intensive management training are the exception rather than the rule, it is important to recognize and take measures to prevent the possible negative effects of such training. Intensive management development training, particularly in encounter group settings, creates a powerful situation that enables managers to take a fresh look at themselves; however, it may also expose them to attack and rejection. The potential for harm lies mainly in the power relationship between trainer and participants. Problems may develop as a result of the trainers' (1) potential for abuse of power because of their superior position, (2) failure to be accepting, (3) abdication of authority, and (4) unrealistically high expectations. Individuals particularly likely to be hurt by intensive management development training are those who possess one or more of the following characteristics: fragility, unattractiveness, characteristics different from the leader and or other participants, opposition to the norms of the training program, and self-destructiveness. The risks of intensive training can be minimized by making attendance at intensive training sessions voluntary, screening potential participants with care, conducting thorough briefings and debriefings for participants, selecting and training trainers carefully, and developing guidelines for trainers to follow when dealing with high-risk participants. (MN)

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Robert E. Kaplan

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Technical Report 19

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THE PERILS OF INTENSIVE MANAGEMENT TRAINING

AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

Robert E. Kaplan

Technical Report Number 19
October 1981

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5000 Laurinda Drive
Greensboro, North Carolina 27402

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ISBN 0-912879-17-3

The Perils of Intensive Management Training and How to Avoid Them

Robert E. Kaplan
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Along with its great potential to help managers learn and develop, intensive management training can, under certain conditions, lead to harm. Intensive training creates a powerful situation that enables managers to take a fresh look at themselves but may also expose them to attack and rejection. The potential for harm resides primarily in the power relationship between trainer and participants, in the make-up of the trainer, and in the injury-prone characteristics of some participants. Done competently and responsibly, intensive management training need not hurt anyone. This paper itemizes possible causes of harm and recommends practices for keeping risks to a minimum.

Managers can benefit from intensive training, but they can also be hurt by it. Although negative outcomes seem to be far more the exception than the rule in intensive management training, it is important to recognize what potential for harm there is and to do what we can to minimize it.

Most of the examples of harm from intensive training programs come from the literature on encounter groups (Lieberman, Yalom, & Miles, 1973; Kaplan, 1980). This is not because other kinds of management development do not hurt people but because the ill effects of other forms have not been studied. Because of its potency, intensive management training is a prime candidate for research on stresses and hazards. Recently Goldstein (1980, p. 258) stated that "investigations of the psychological stress that may be induced by instructional programs should be extended beyond the examination of sensitivity (encounter group) training programs."

Intensive management training has a potential for harm because the goal of the training is to foster self-insight and self-improvement in individual managers. Subject matter includes anything from conflict management to time management to interpersonal competence, but the training mounts in intensity as it focuses on the individual. The individual gets in-depth attention via a data-and-feedback sequence in which participants generate data on themselves, either in live exercises or with paper-and-pencil tests, and then receive feedback from staff and/or fellow participants. The data-and-feedback sequence is accomplished in different ways in

different types of programs. Some programs use the unstructured T-group as the core, with lectures and other exercises helping to make the connection from exotic training group to managers' work lives. Other programs generate data on participants with methods having greater face validity than the T-group. Management simulations, some lasting several hours and realistic down to the last detail, provide rich lodes of data for giving feedback to individuals. Feedback usually comes from both trainers and fellow participants. Yet another type of program employs psychological tests and assessment center exercises to build a data base to support individual learning. In such programs the format tends to be structured, and the feedback is provided mainly through individual conferences with a trainer. Thus, data-and-feedback sequences vary in intensive management training programs along several dimensions, including, for example, how realistic the data-generating methods are, how structured the data-getting and feedback-giving mechanisms are, whether feedback comes from the staff or also from fellow participants, and whether feedback is given privately or in a group setting.

The data-and-feedback sequence coupled with a low participant-trainer ratio creates the conditions for personal learning but can also put the individual in jeopardy. Participants are spared the passive and impersonal experience of the seminar participant but they also give up the comparative safety and anonymity. The beneficial elements of intensive training are also risk factors.

The risk factors in intensive management training can be controlled successfully by taking the proper precautions, just as the risk of flying in airplanes is minimized with appropriate safety measures. This paper details the major risk factors in intensive training and suggests a number of corresponding safety measures.

For the purposes of this paper, intensive training refers only to groups of people who do not work together. Intensive training can also be given to coworkers and work groups and poses additional risks, namely, possible repercussions from having one's limitations revealed, or from confronting one's associates with their limitations. This application of intensive training is beyond the scope of the paper.

In this paper, harm is defined from the standpoint of the participant. It is also possible to take the point of view of the participant's organization, which could evaluate an outcome as negative that the participant considered positive. An example would be a high performing manager who realizes in the training program how much he or she dislikes

the job and quits as a result. Similarly, psychotherapy can be evaluated from the viewpoint of either the client or society (Strupp & Hadley, 1977). But for the present purposes, negative outcomes are considered only from the individual's perspective.

Some Causes of Harm in Intensive Training

The Trainer

Whether participants gain from intensive training or are diminished by it depends more than any other factor on the trainer. The trainer's potential to act destructively resides in a number of factors, including: (a) the trainer's superior position, (b) abuse of power, (c) failure to be accepting, (d) abdication of authority, and (e) unrealistically high expectations.

The trainer's superior position. Trainers occupy a superior position because they are formally in charge of the program and because they are presumed competent to hold their position. This may seem like an obvious point but some trainers dispute it. One prominent encounter group leader maintained that "group members are responsible for themselves," and denied that the leader had greater power or responsibility than group members. Similarly, Gibb (1972) argued that the encounter group leader is on a par with group members and the leader's chief task is to foster, in his words, a sense of "withness"--being with, instead of in charge of, the group.

The rationale for playing down the power of the leader and playing up the power of the participants is to encourage participation and self-responsibility in participants. This is defensible as long as the leader does not lose sight of the difference between pedagogical overstatement and the realities of the relationship between leader and participants. The dean of a workshop in group dynamics, for example, scheduled an extracurricular hike along a waterfall. Because the area was dangerous and had been declared off limits by the training organization, the dean made the hike optional, and therefore supposedly unofficial. Nevertheless, of the 50 people enrolled in the program, 45 showed up, and one woman who frolicked carelessly along the path fell and injured herself. The dean disclaimed responsibility, but it seems clear that he had influence that he wished to deny.

The leader holds a distinct power advantage because the leader occupies a superior position in the training situation. Critiques of leader destructiveness focus on the leader's personal traits--sadistic and exploitive tendencies (Lieberman et al., 1973; Hadley & Strupp, 1976)--and overlook the structural fact of the leader's ascendent position.

Abuse of power. When one thinks of destructive trainers, what comes to mind first is trainers who are

abusive. They attack participants for not participating enough. They push participants into activities that they are not ready for. They are blatantly aggressive, wantonly destructive. The "aggressive stimulator" is one type of trainer found to hurt people (Lieberman et al., 1973).

Destructiveness is a product of the personality of the leader and the leader's position of power in the training setting. The power advantage allows leaders to show their sadistic side and get away with it. Trainers act destructively not just because they are inclined that way but because they can do so with impunity. A power advantage can bring out the coerciveness and sadism in the powerholder, especially when the low-power party resists (Kipnis, 1976).

Leaders also get away with being destructive by justifying it to themselves and the group. They cloak their destructive behavior in a mantle of righteousness. They act as if the training and their role require them to be demanding and harsh. This righteous attitude is the "sanction for evil" that Sanford and Comstock (1971) see as the root of all forms of social destructiveness.

Abdication of authority. Less obvious than the abuse of power, but potentially as destructive, is the failure to take power. While Lieberman et al. (1973) found that overtly destructive leaders were responsible for a 12% casualty rate, the laissez-faire leader incurred an 8% rate. Thus, harm may come as a result of sins of commission or omission. The abdicating leader may sit idly while one participant attacks another, and in this way fail to make the group a safe place for all participants.

Just as the overtly destructive leader may tell you that it was for the good of the group or the individual, leaders may abdicate not out of negligence but out of a misguided sense of what it means to be a non-directive leader. Neophyte trainers, for example, have a difficult time understanding the non-directive role in unstructured groups, and often interpret the reactive approach (let the group make the first move and then lead by shaping the response) to mean inaction. This distorted notion of non-directive leadership can also be driven by an excess of empathy with participants. Some trainers are so concerned with developing rapport that they effectively fuse their identity with participants. Rather than set themselves apart, they draw no distinctions. Rather than set themselves above, they take no prerogatives. Gestalt therapists call this "confluence"--the fusion of one's identity with that of another. The danger here is that leaders of this type surrender not only their separate identities but, more important, they abdicate their leadership.

Failure to be accepting. For a manager to overcome deficiencies, he or she must first recognize the fact that the deficiency exists. When the trainer accepts the manager for what he or she is--faults and all--it is easier for the manager to accept his or her limitations. Conversely, the trainer who rejects a participant not only chokes off learning but opens the door to destructiveness. Some trainers have a limited capacity to connect up emotionally with participants or certain types of participants, and this emotional disconnection becomes a breeding ground for aggression, whether overt or passive. Melanie Klein (1946) calls this disconnection "splitting." She describes it as a circuitous and emotionally dishonest route by which the trainer comes to reject a participant. The process begins within the trainer, who disowns parts of himself he finds unacceptable. The second step occurs in the relationship between trainer and participant--the trainer is quick to recognize in others the very qualities he has disowned within himself. The cycle is complete when the trainer responds to those qualities in the participant in the same way he responds to them internally--by rejecting them. The trainer's inability to accept himself becomes an inability to accept others. In this way, a trainer who has trouble asserting himself may reject this handicap in himself and consequently feel intolerant of unassertive trainees.

Splitting occurs not only in relation to individuals but also in relation to the group as a whole. It is relatively easy for the group to fall into a pattern that emphasizes the assets of the trainer and the liabilities of the trainees. It is easy for group members to adopt the attitude that the trainer is the paragon of whatever virtue the program is offering, while the trainees are ignorant heathens. The difference in knowledge or skill is exaggerated; the trainer is put on a pedestal while the participants sit reverently at the trainer's feet. Although participants may be susceptible to this fantasy, the trainer cannot afford to participate in it. Another occasion for splitting on the group level is when leaders conveniently dismiss from their minds the personal struggles they have gone through, the doubts they have had about self-worth, and at the same time look down on group members for struggling and for having self-doubts as they come to terms with their limitations and try to change.

Unrealistic expectations. Another way in which trainers create the potential for harm is by bringing unrealistically high expectations to the training endeavor. When trainers expect too much, some participants are bound to fall short of expectations and the trainer is likely to reject them.

The unrealistic trainer expects the training program to make a world of difference, expects to get through to everybody, expects all this to happen in the short space of a few days. These expectations are unrealistic because they fly in the face of the way people learn and develop. As potent as intensive training may be, at best it transforms the lives of only a minority of the people who attend. Trainers must count on resistance; they cannot assume a friction-free training universe. Even highly motivated individuals are ambivalent about their weaknesses and are driven simultaneously by "the need to know and the fear of knowing" (Maslow, 1968). Moreover, every group of participants probably contains individuals whose interest is outweighed by their reluctance or outright resistance. Perhaps the time is not right for them. Perhaps they have attended against their will.

High expectations are dangerous if many participants can't conform to them. When participants prove unable to meet these expectations or actually fight them, the trainer may feel thwarted. Unrealistic trainers are apt to misinterpret resistance, to want to sweep it away. If the trainer becomes an irresistible force and the manager an immovable object, the trainer may resort to pressure tactics. Unrealistic trainers put their own needs--to have an impact or to run a successful program--ahead of the participants' needs. Trainers of this type have been described as having an "excessive need to make people change" (Hadley & Strupp, 1976). More in tune with what they want than what participants are going through, these trainers in effect have no empathy.

Summary. From the foregoing five characteristics of trainers that incline them to be destructive, two themes emerge: power and the trainer's stance toward participants. First, the trainer's power advantage gives the trainer some free rein for any destructive tendencies. Destructive trainers abuse their power as well as fail to use their power to prevent people from being mistreated. Second, the trainer's inner stance toward participants makes a world of difference. The trainer who has trouble accepting people is more likely to be destructive. Trainers are more likely to aggress against, or allow others to aggress against, those individuals they are unable to accept. As we saw, splitting is one way in which trainers reject participants. Trainers who subscribe to unrealistically high expectations are also prone to reject participants, namely those participants who can't or won't live up to those expectations.

Although we talk about destructive trainer behavior as though it is obvious, the fact is that it can be difficult to spot in vivo. For one thing, destructiveness hardly ever occurs in isolation but happens in combination with other

behavior. Most actions are multi-faceted. Trainers who lean too hard on a participant are probably also pursuing the purposes of the training. Second, people who aggress against others can be depended on to rationalize their behavior (Kipnis, 1976). They may justify it or they may deny it altogether. The latter course is what Laing (1967) called "mystification"--exercising power and denying it. Evidence for these rationalizing tendencies is that the trainers in one study were the worst of several predictors of injury in their groups (Lieberman et al., 1973).

The Participant

Not all managers who attend intensive training are equally likely to be hurt. Individuals prone to injury in training programs may exhibit one or more of these characteristics: (a) fragility, (b) unattractiveness, (c) characteristics different from the leader and/or the other participants, (d) opposition to the norms of the training program, and (e) self-destructiveness. These individuals get hurt because they bruise more easily, or because others in the training setting find it harder to identify with them, or because they are more likely to be picked on.

Personal fragility. Lieberman et al. (1973) found that the individual who was injured in encounter groups tended to be someone with a history of psychological disturbance, or who was in crisis at the time, or whose self-esteem was low, or who came to the experience very needy. People who are weak psychologically are more likely to be hurt by the normal rigors of intensive training, not to mention the harm that can be caused by harsh treatment. Any group of participants may contain a person or two with a history of personal problems or with life crises on their hands; and in a weakened condition and needy, they may entertain unrealistically high hopes for the training, and thus make an unwholesome combination with a trainer who encourages unrealistic expectations.

Unattractiveness. People who are not especially attractive personally and interpersonally are at greater risk in intensive training programs. No sooner does a program begin than an informal and unspoken status hierarchy emerges, with position assigned on the basis of looks, brains, verbal agility, self-confidence, and interpersonal ease. Individuals who have less going for them--including the fragile and needy--fall to the bottom of the status hierarchy. This arrangement may change as the group matures. Early "winners" sometimes prove to be flashes in the pan, and early "losers" may eventually reveal impressive managerial abilities and valuable personal resources--if given a chance to show them

(Mann, 1975). But "losers," those who slip to the bottom of the heap and stay there or the early winners who are knocked off their lofty perches, are more vulnerable. Because they have less to offer in the eyes of the others, they get less, or what they get is negative. Because trainers enjoy high status in the training situation, they may gravitate toward high-status participants and away from those with low status. They might easily shun an overweight and homely elementary school principal with a mild speech impediment; a loud and overbearing sales manager who insists on telling bad jokes; a recent M.B.A. who tries too hard to impress everyone.

Opposition to the program. If the program is good and most of the participants see it that way, then someone who carps at the program or drags his feet will try the patience of the others. To participate in an intensive training program is to submit to a demanding experience. People are expected to take part in exercises and to join in group discussions; someone who is shy or immobilized in groups will find such participation difficult. People are expected in due time to talk about themselves and to articulate their impressions of other participants; individuals who regard this kind of conversation as an invasion of privacy, or for some other reason feel nervous, are poorly suited for such interaction. People who don't fit in participate less or complain more and, in one way or another, single themselves out for negative attention. One participant wandered the halls during much of a management simulation. The staff noticed this unusual behavior and fretted about it. It turned out that the individual, whose back-home job involved little paper work, was thrown by the thick sheaf of memos in his in-basket at the start of the simulation. Fortunately for him, he was lucid about his problem and articulated it clearly and with emotion immediately after the simulation. Still, lack of facility with written material made for a bad fit with this particular program and could have ruined the program for him.

Research on encounter groups has also found that participants who don't take to their roles are less likely to benefit and more likely to have a negative experience. Lieberman et al. (1973) measured a variable called VCIA, which is the composite of three variables--Value Congruence, Influence, and Activity. Individuals who received a low VCIA score held training-related values that were incongruent with those of the group, and these individuals were relatively inactive and uninfluential in the group. In other words, they were marginal members.

Like the unattractive individual, the individual who makes a poor adjustment to the participant's role is pushed to the margin of the group. And being marginal exposes the

individual to the danger of being split off from everyone else.

Dissimilarity. "Different" individuals are also at risk in training programs. They can differ from the leader or the group in age, sex, race, ethnic background, education, and other ways, but they do not necessarily have to belong to the segments of our society that we commonly think of as minorities. An older white male is in jeopardy when no one else in the group or staff falls in that category. What creates the risk is being underrepresented in the group and unrepresented on the staff.

A woman from Denmark said little during the course of a week-long training program. She was seen as aloof and as a result was largely ignored by the staff and participants alike. It wasn't until late in the week that someone questioned her about her attitude and found out that, because English was her second language, she had been having trouble following what was said. She spoke English fluently so no one suspected that she had trouble understanding. Her low participation and impassive expression were misinterpreted as standoffishness. No one realized it was because she was a Dane in a program made up of U.S. citizens.

Thus, dissimilar participants are more likely to be at risk because they are more to be cut off from the rest of the group. It may be harder for staff and participants to understand and identify with them, and they are more likely to be coerced if they resist (Kipnis, 1976).

Self-destructiveness. In addition to becoming passive targets for mistreatment, individuals may actually invite attack and exclusion. They set up a complementary relationship in which their part is to be mistreated or rejected (Laing, 1967). They enter relationships anticipating a negative outcome because they have learned to expect the worst from relationships. Expecting hostility or rejection, the individual incites it in others, and thereby fulfills the prophecy.

In the novel Lord of the Flies, Golding (1959) provides us with an archetype of the group casualty in the character of Piggy. After a plane accident, a group of boys is abandoned on an uninhabited tropical island. Short and fat and bothered by asthma, Piggy is both physically unattractive and inept at the skills that give a boy membership and respect among his peers. Accustomed to deviant status, he boasts about being the only one at his school with asthma. In one telling early episode, he asks another boy what his name is. Ralph answers but does not ask in return. Rather than be

ignored, Piggy goes after negative recognition. He confides in his companion:

> "I don't care what they call me, so long as they don't call me what they used to call me at school."
>
> Ralph was faintly interested: "What was that?"
>
> Piggy whispered: "They used to call me 'Piggy.'" (1959, p. 9)

Ralph shrieks with laughter, and "Piggy grins reluctantly, pleased despite himself at even this much recognition." Unfortunately, when all the boys assemble, Ralph betrays the confidence.

> A storm of laughter arose and even the tiniest child joined in. For the moment the boys were a closed circuit of sympathy with Piggy outside. (p. 18)

Piggy helped to place himself in a role that was consummated when he was murdered in cold blood.

In addition to being dangerous to themselves, these scapegoats are seductive for the rest of a training group. For a trainer or participants prone to splitting, the self-destructive individual is a perfect complement. For individuals frustrated with the tough business of personal learning and development, the provocative individual is a convenient target for pent-up frustration. And once an antagonist is drawn into the web of a self-destructive participant, it can be difficult to get out. Because this type of individual is difficult to evade and tempting to attack, they have earned the nickname among trainers of "tarbaby."

Summary. Injury-prone individuals are those who come to a program in a weakened condition and are therefore more vulnerable. Injury-prone individuals are also those who slip to the periphery of a group. People may avoid them because they are unattractive, different from the rest of the group, or out of place in intensive training. Injury-prone individuals are more likely to be rejected or attacked because they are weak and unable to protect themselves, because they differ in ways that the others see as undesirable, because they resist the training, or because they actively provoke attack and rejection.

The Destructive Episode: Mismanaging Conflict

As we have seen, certain factors predispose trainers to hurt participants, and certain factors predispose individual participants to get hurt. But the picture is not complete without looking closely at how potential victims and potential victimizers interact to produce a negative outcome.

A destructive episode is a conflict mismanaged. Conflict occurs when the focal individual opposes what the staff or other participants want. The individual might openly criticize the program or staff, or show displeasure nonverbally. Such a person might interfere with the program or other people's learning by being silent when participation is wanted or by monopolizing discussion when others want to speak.

Next, the staff or other participants respond to the individual's presenting behavior. They would have the person criticize less, cooperate more, talk less, talk more, perform better, offend less, or whatever. They approach the person about his or her behavior; they want the person to change it or at least acknowledge it. If the focal individual says: "Yes, I know what you mean, my friends have said the same thing, and I'd like to do something about it, that's why I am here," then confronters will no doubt be satisfied. Often, however, the conflict takes a different, more destructive course. Here are three scenarios.

Scenario #1: "They attack and the individual fights back." Every experienced trainer has run across the participant whose incompetence is obvious to everyone but himself. The "problem person" is one whose social handicaps are matched by his unwillingness to acknowledge them. At some point in a program the intrepid trainer takes on the problem person. In the following example, the group is discussing each participant's role in, let's say, an elaborate decision-making exercise, and the conversation has come around to this individual.

Trainer: Phil, it's your turn. Why don't you begin by saying how you saw yourself in the decision-making exercise?

Phil: What, is there some problem?!

Trainer: I didn't say there was a problem. I want you to tell us what role you took in the exercise.

Phil: Look, you're the teacher. You tell me.

Trainer: It would be better if you went first because . . .

Phil: Would you stop playing games with me! If you have something to say, say it!

Trainer (getting agitated): Alright, I will! Having a conversation with you is a little like being run over by a bulldozer. Frankly, I don't like it, and I know other people don't like it either.

Phil: What the hell do you mean, I'm like a bulldozer!

A Participant (leaping in): I'll give you an example! When we did that exercise on decision making, I couldn't get you to listen to me. Every time I opened my mouth . . .

Trainer (breaking in): Take this conversation, for example. You're impossible to deal with. I'm angry enough to spit.

Phil: What are you so worked up about?! I'm not.

Trainer: That's a laugh. When it comes to being self-aware, you're as blind as a bat.

At this point the trainer and his allies among the participants jump in with both feet. They try to get through to him, and he resists all the more.

A conflict breaks out and quickly escalates. A difference in perceptions is transformed into a fight to decide who is right. The focal person's assailants try to force him to yield, and he stubbornly denies them the satisfaction. He stands to lose the fight, because the sides are drawn unevenly. He is on the wrong side of a serious power differential.

In the hypothetical dialogue, the trainer started the conflict but it could just as well have been one of the participants. Who starts the conflict doesn't matter. What matters is that the focal person is attacked and that no one intercedes effectively in his behalf. If it is the participants who lead the charge, then the individual is in trouble

unless the trainer intervenes. The trainer is the leading candidate to oppose an attack, and if the trainer attacks, there is probably no effective counterforce.

In the case above, Phil touched off the conflict with his obnoxious behavior, but he might just as well have been conspicuously absent from discussions. The presenting behavior is less important than what happens once attention is called to it. When the confronters don't get the response they want, they get hooked by the target's active or passive aggression. The fight soon takes on a life of its own and rushes headlong to an unfortunate end. The trainer fails to protect the individual. The target doesn't have the interpersonal skills to free himself from a destructive situation. People who had no intention of hurting anyone end up doing so.

Scenario #2: "They push and the individual gives in." In Scenario #1 the focal persons don't take their medicine lying down, but harm can also come to individuals when they are pushed and they don't push back. Let's take the case of a female manager (it could easily be a male) who excels at the "soft" influence skills like listening, persuading, and collaborating, but is ineffective at the "hard" influence skills like arguing, bargaining, and coercing. When the time comes for her to receive feedback, everyone agrees that this is her problem. She doesn't quite see it, but being self-effacing, she gives the others the benefit of the doubt. Then the trainer, who is not content with insight, pushes her to "experiment with new behavior." The trainer tells her to say loudly and clearly: "I am strong, and I'll fight if I have to." Although she doesn't like the idea, she complies but only manages a half-hearted rendition. The trainer has her try again but this time she laughs apologetically. The trainer exhorts, and some participants cheer her on, but she can't satisfy them and gives up. The exercise proves to be a defeat which she has trouble getting over.

In this destructive cycle the target individual is no more receptive than in the first cycle, but the conflict between the individual and the rest of the group never materializes because she suppresses her side of it. Wanting to please, she gives lip service to perceptions that she privately questions. At the least, she pays a price in self-alienation. But the damage can be much more serious when a self-effacing individual is paired with a trainer harboring delusions of grandeur. Target individuals can get pushed in over their heads.

Scenario #3: "They disregard the individual, and the individual acts resigned." Harm can also come to a participant by not-so-benign neglect. The participant is likely to

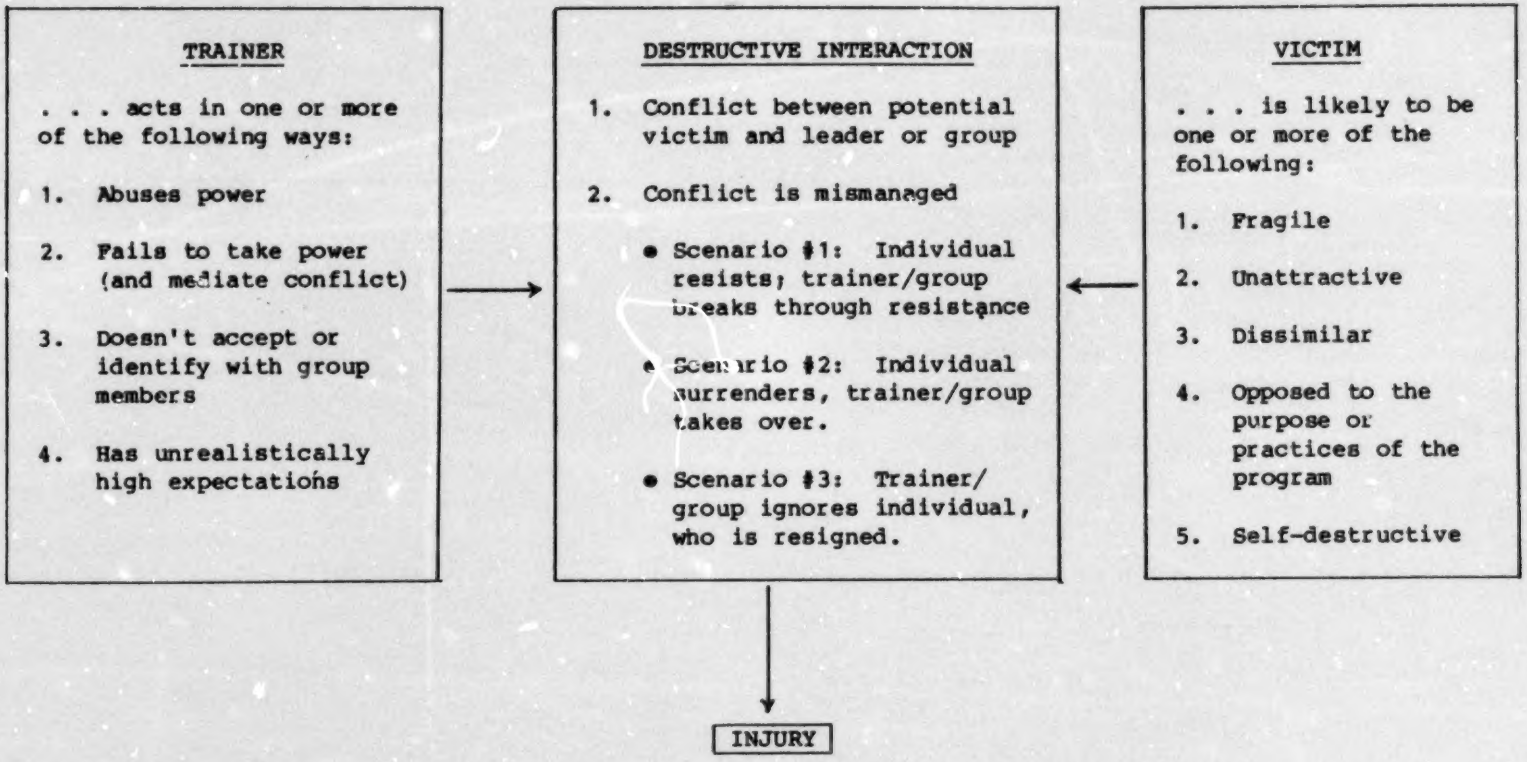
be a marginal one, someone to whom others in the group are not attracted. Suppose the individual is an older male first-line supervisor in a group dominated by younger up-and-coming managers. He makes one or two attempts to participate but no one responds. He disappears into the woodwork, and no one, including the trainer, seems to notice. Neither the staff nor the rest of the participants understand or care to invest in the individual. They do not attack him actively; their aggression is passive. Lieberman et al. (1973) reported the case of a woman whose self-esteem dropped after training because she was "convinced that the group leader neither liked nor accepted her." She sent frequent "distress signals" which he ignored (p. 180). Thus, a person need not be attacked or coerced to get hurt in a training program. It can be enough to be systematically ignored. Note that the injury is not inflicted in a single incident, as in the first two scenarios, but grows over the course of the program. Rather than a destructive episode, it is a destructive relationship that causes the injury.

Summary. The trainer's potential to do harm and the participant's potential to be harmed are realized in mismanaged conflict. The trainer or fellow participants have a bone to pick with a focal person, but the conflict becomes destructive. In the first two scenarios the confrontation goes awry. In the first scenario the confronters meet resistance and try their best to break through it. In the second scenario the focal person surrenders without a fight and the others push him into things he can't handle. In the third scenario, the confrontation never materializes because the others tacitly decide the individual isn't worth the trouble. Not only blatant direct aggression, but also passive aggression can be damaging.

For a list of three destructive scenarios and the factors leading to injury, see Figure 1.

Figure 1

How Managers Can Get Hurt in Intensive Training


TRAINER
. . . acts in one or more of the following ways:
1. Abuses power
2. Fails to take power (and mediate conflict)
3. Doesn't accept or identify with group members
4. Has unrealistically high expectations
DESTRUCTIVE INTERACTION
1. Conflict between potential victim and leader or group
2. Conflict is mismanaged
• Scenario #1: Individual resists; trainer/group breaks through resistance
• Scenario #2: Individual surrenders, trainer/group takes over.
• Scenario #3: Trainer/ group ignores individual, who is resigned.
VICTIM
. . . is likely to be one or more of the following:
1. Fragile
2. Unattractive
3. Dissimilar
4. Opposed to the purpose or practices of the program
5. Self-destructive
INJURY

Minimizing the Risk

Intensive management training is a two-edged sword. To maximize benefit and minimize harm, precautions must be taken. This section itemizes preventive measures after first giving an example of the safe use of intensive training.

The Southern New England Telephone Company (SNETCO) in New Haven, Connecticut, put 494 managers through an intensive training program from 1972 to 1980 without one manager becoming a casualty. This in spite of the fact that SNETCO's program is a powerful experience that teaches the dynamics of groups and organizations, and reveals a manager's impact on others. The program includes a T-Group (called a personal development group) as well as lectures, discussions, and simulation exercises. The Company's management development staff gathers information on program outcomes from a structured evaluation form sent to participants about a week after returning to SNETCO and from follow-up conversations with each individual within a month of their return.

How has SNETCO achieved its unblemished record? While it is impossible to know which precautions make the difference, the following set overdetermines safe handling of participants.

1. A prerequisite experience consisting of a one-week nonresidential in-house training program that introduces participants to behavioral science and to experiential learning. The program is moderately intensive and mildly stressful and as such makes for a good preview of the intensive programs.

2. Briefings that convey clearly the nature of the intensive program. Briefings consist of: (a) discussions of the intensive program at the end of the prerequisite program, (b) a meeting of all those individuals enrolled in the intensive program, (c) readings on intensive training given out ahead of time, and (d) the option to talk to other managers who have attended the program.

3. Voluntary attendance. The SNETCO staffs recommends that managers attend the program voluntarily.

4. An application form that among other things spells out several guidelines to help participants decide whether to attend. The guidelines state that: (a) individuals should have a genuine desire to

learn about themselves, about small group behavior, and about other organizational dynamics; (b) individuals should attend voluntarily; (c) individuals going through a personal crisis or currently in a very stressful situation might wait until a later time to attend; and (d) persons currently undergoing psychotherapy should discuss the advisability of attending with their therapists or counselors.

5. Competent trainers. Trainers are drawn from SNETCO's own training staff and a pool of outside consultants. The SNETCO management development staff knows the trainers and knows them to be competent and conscientious.

6. Composition. SNETCO tries to match the composition of a program staff to the race, gender, and (if possible) age of the participant population. Furthermore, when only two or three persons of a demographic category, like blacks, attend a program, they are placed in the same group to build in mutual support. In addition, participants can influence which staff members or participants they do not work with. Everyone is notified ahead of time who will attend the program and they can request not to be in the same group as a certain trainer or manager.

7. Debriefing. Each participant is approached after the program by the staff member who did the preprogram briefing. The staff member discusses the individual's experience and provides support as the individual reenters the organization.

In addition to these steps a general factor minimizes risk at SNETCO. Managers attend the residential programs in the context of SNETCO's ongoing involvement with intensive training. To date, about 500 of SNETCO's 4,000 management employees have participated in a residential program. As a result, the training has become known around the organization, and a positive aura surrounds it. SNETCO also has a history of involvement with organization development, which is a close cousin of intensive training. Thus, the individual manager attends a program not in a vacuum but in a supportive organizational culture.

There are three major elements to the precautions taken by SNETCO. First, the organization prepares participants carefully through introductory training and briefings on the advanced programs. The preparation enables the manager to make an informed choice. Second, SNETCO uses trainers that it can count on to take good care of participants. Third,

the management development staff follows up on every participant after the program and helps the individual reenter the organization.

Prevention

In general, responsibility for minimizing the chances of injury during intensive training rests in the hands of four parties--the trainers, training management, the organization, and the participants (see Figure 2).

Trainers. Trainers must not act destructively and must keep other participants from doing so. Of all the influences on a training program, the trainer is in the best position to keep participants from getting hurt. The trainer's responsibility reduces to four rules for preventing harm. (Naturally if the concern were to maximize benefit, the list could be extended.)

1. Do not aggress against participants. The trainer must not attack, coerce, or forcibly reject participants. The trainer must not meet resistance by trying to break through it.

   In practice, there is a fine line between the constructive and destructive use of power by the trainer. But it is a line that the trainer must toe.

2. Do not permit other participants to aggress against a participant. Just as trainers must not commit harm, they must not allow the group to do it. Groups are notorious for mounting enormous pressure against deviant members, and the trainer must blow the whistle on any ganging up on individuals. Nondirective leadership is not the same as laissez-faire leadership, and the trainer must head off any violence by group members.

3. Muster acceptance for every participant. Although the trainer will be drawn to some individuals more than others, it is incumbent on the trainer to accept each member of the group. Every group of participants will contain individuals who have less going for them, or who resist the training program, or who are different from the trainer. The trainer should identify these individuals early on in the program and work hard to understand and look after them. If there is more than one trainer, then the trainer who reacts coolly or badly to a given

Figure 2

Preventive Measures

Trainers

1. Do not aggress against participants.
2. Do not permit other participants to aggress against an individual.
3. Muster acceptance for every participant.
4. Look after casualty-prone individuals.

The Manager's Organization

1. Educate prospective participants about intensive training.
2. Avoid sending people against their will.
3. Know the training organization and trainers.
4. Follow up after the program.

Training Management

1. Select competent trainers.
2. Offset trainer power:
   - Use more than one trainer
   - Use an ombudsman, or make a counselor available
   - Evaluate staff performance.
3. Compose participant groups and staffs advisedly.

The Manager/Participant

1. Find out about intensive training.
2. Check out the trainers.
3. Attend willingly.
4. Choose the right time.
5. Be careful about being the only one of your kind.
6. Don't tolerate abuse.

participant should let the other trainers know. Chances are another trainer will respond better to the individual.

4. Look after casualty-prone individuals. The staff should know what types of individuals are at risk, and they should compare notes regularly on the individuals whom they are worried about. The staff should make sure that these individuals are kept out of harm's way and that they get their share of positive attention.

   The trainer should be prepared for a range of responses to the program from participants. It is okay for some participants to take a low profile. An individual for whom experiential learning is a new and dangerous thing may learn a great deal by looking on. The trainer should also be prepared for individuals who resist the program. Trainers can negotiate a truce whereby skeptical participants acknowledge their misgivings and agree not to interfere with the participation of others.

Training Management. Also responsible for preventing injury is the organization that offers the training, whether it is part of the manager's own organization or an outside group such as AMA, NTL, a management school at a university, the Center for Creative Leadership, or any of the numerous small or large training centers that are proliferating today. A training organization's major responsibilities are to:

1. Select competent trainers. The organization is responsible for employing people who follow the rules for trainers listed above. Even if the organization can recruit the right kind of people, it must be sensitive to the fact that even good ones go through bad periods. Just as prospective participants who are under a lot of stress are well advised to postpone training, trainers with severe marital problems or serious health problems or disturbing career issues may have to be benched temporarily. Or they should not work alone.

2. Offset trainer power. The potential for harm lies not only in the trainer's personal make-up but also in the trainer's dominance in the training situation. Therefore, it is important to create structures that counterbalance trainer power. These structures can be inserted in the training situation

itself so as to discourage abuses or to correct them as soon as possible.

One way is to avoid having only one trainer. A second staff member on the scene can inhibit abuse or oppose it if it occurs. If the trainers have separate groups, then they should be in close enough touch to know what is happening in the other group. This mechanism works only if the trainers are able to influence each other. The domineering type of trainer may also dominate a colleague, or a senior trainer may disregard a junior trainer.

Another way to offset trainer power is to use an ombudsman. In the event that they get embroiled in a conflict with the trainer or feel they are being treated unfairly, it is important for participants to have recourse. An ombudsman provides this recourse. A similar function can be served by a psychiatrist or psychologist who acts as a counselor to any participant wanting help during the program. NTL uses either a psychiatrist or psychologist in this capacity in its summer programs at Bethel, Maine. This person should be invested with the power to intervene in the situation.

In addition to checks and balances installed in the training situation, the training organization should determine afterward whether any harm was done to participants. Trainers should be evaluated. This can be accomplished through peer review at the end of a program, with a report turned in to the management of the training organization. The participants should also evaluate the program and the staff, and indicate whether anyone got hurt. In one study, the best predictor of casualties was peer nominations (Lieberman et al., 1973).

3. Compose groups of participants and staff wisely. In light of the fact that "different" individuals have a harder time, groups should be composed so as to avoid having just one person in a given category. If possible, avoid having one black or one woman or one fast-track manager or one CEO in a group of participants. This point applies with particular force when the category sets the individual obviously apart and when the category carries with it a lower status in society.

In assembling a staff, try to represent the major categories within the participant group. If a number

of blacks or Hispanics will be present, for example, put a black or Hispanic on the staff.

The manager's organization. The responsibilities of the manager's organization are to send people to training and to select programs for them to attend.

1. Educate prospective participants about intensive training. To the extent that people have realistic expectations about intensive training, they are less likely to make a poor choice about it or a poor adjustment to it. For the same reason, job applicants who take a job after getting realistic previews of it adjust better and are less likely to quit. This is not to say that all participants must know about a program beforehand--many people arrive knowing nothing about a program and are none the worse for it. But to go into intensive training blind entails an element of risk, more for some people than others, and a prior orientation reduces that risk.

2. Avoid sending people to training against their will. An individual opposed to a training program is an individual at some risk. The individual's resistance may melt away once the program begins. But it is far better for the individual to accept the decision to attend the program, and, as with any decision, acceptance is greater if the individual takes part in the decision. This does not mean that the training has to be the individual's idea. Obviously, the individual's superior or some other party can and often does take the initiative. Nor does this recommendation mean that the individual has to participate in the decision; some people will accept the decision readily and attend willingly with no participation. The intent of this recommendation is to avoid having people show up at programs, as one participant did, saying bitterly, "I have been sent to finishing school!"

3. Know the training organization and trainers. The home organization should be able to count on the training organization to handle its managers with kid gloves. If possible, the organization should also know the trainers who will be staffing the program. A profession is only as good as the individual professional.

4. Follow up after the program. The home organization should find out afterwards whether the manager was mistreated in any way. SNETCO sets a good example

by giving out a questionnaire and by talking to the manager in person. In addition to monitoring, the debriefing also helps the manager recover from any ill effects and to make the transition back to work.

Participants. Managers contemplating intensive training have a responsibility to look out for themselves. They can do so by finding out about intensive training, by checking out the trainers, by attending willingly, by making sure that the time is right for attending, by avoiding being the "only one," and by escaping from a noxious situation should it occur. Nearly all of these have been covered or implied in the previous three sets of precautions, so they will be touched on briefly here.

1. Find out about intensive training. Although it is the responsibility of others to inform the manager, managers should do their own investigating so that they know what the program involves, what they can expect to get out of it, and what risks they may run. In this way the manager can help to avoid unpleasant surprises.

2. Check out the trainers. For reasons given above, this is advisable. If your organization doesn't do it, then it is a good idea to have it done yourself.

3. Attend willingly. Managers who are dead set against a program can easily start out on the wrong foot and thereby put themselves at risk. If, once you are there, you persist in outwardly or inwardly fighting the program, the staff or other participants may eventually attack or reject you. If you are truly opposed to going, then try to work out the conflict with the people sending you. If you still are given no choice, try to understand the reasons you are being sent so that you can open yourself up to going.

4. Choose the right time. Intensive training can be stressful; a very stressful time in one's life may therefore be the wrong time to go. On the other hand, people get more out of intensive training when they want to learn about themselves, and this motive may be born of disconfirming (and therefore troubling) experiences at work or at home. A blend of the energy and the urge to learn makes the time right for intensive training.

5. Be careful about being the "only one." If possible, find out ahead of time about the demographics of the participant group and the trainers. You are better off if you are not the only one of your kind.

6. Don't tolerate mistreatment. Remember that under no conditions do the staff or other participants have the right to mistreat a participant. If faced with a noxious situation, do whatever you can to remove yourself, either by sidestepping it in the program or by leaving the program altogether.

The foregoing preventive measures are meant to encourage individuals and organizations to exercise care in using intensive management training, but as a whole they should be viewed as important considerations and not as imperatives. Only the set of recommendations applying to trainers should be considered mandatory.

Conclusion

An intensive training program must, by definition, pack a certain punch. But a potent training experience can cut both ways. Of all the factors at play in a training program, the staff is the most critical. Destructive trainers abuse the substantial power accorded to them, or they fail to use it to protect participants. Such trainers conflict with participants by expecting too much of them or by failing to accept them. Characteristics of the participant also play an important part. Individuals prone to injury are weak, or unattractive, or different, or opposed to the training, or self-destructive.

The hazards of intensive management training can be minimized by overdetermining the conditions of safety. The responsibility belongs to the training staff and the participant. The organization offering the training is responsible but so is the organization sending the manager. If these parties all do their part, then the benefits of intensive training can be gained while the risks are kept to a minimum.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Michael Lombardo, the editor of this technical report series, for his thoughtful and helpful suggestions, and also Bill Drath for his valuable editorial work.

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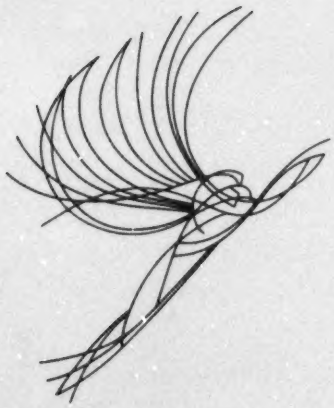

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